

typhus be, as the *Athanasium* hints, a plebeian disease. For several weeks past the mortality bills have averaged some fifty per cent. increase on the ordinary return of deaths! This fearful circumstance, no doubt, arises from the conjoined influences of bad air, bad and insufficient food, bad and insufficient water, insufficient clothing and shelter. Cleanliness, however, which has been well and long reputed the "nurse of health," we can send forth to the abodes and haunts of misery, and if we do not send her, those haunts will despatch an embassy to us, which we would as soon welcome as a falling star, or the belchings of the quaking earth. Cleanliness rides proudly in her agony, on the breast of health-fertilising waters, not squirts and piddling fountains, in fashionable places, nor yet pumps and engine-streams will suffice,—no cock-boat craft to run through muddy culverts will invite our serious goddess to visit us. We are a rich, a great, and a boastful people, and our embassy to invite, our outfit to conduct, our provision to entertain, must be to the full, commensurate with our riches, our greatness, and our boasting. The more liberal the largess on our parts, the more generous the return. Talk of emulating old Rome indeed! why, New York excels us. This should not be for a day, it need not be for a year longer.

We have confined ourselves mainly to the sanitary part of the question as enforced by our contemporary in the article we have alluded to; we have done so at this present writing under a sort of cue thus given to us in the pleasure of our reading, but it will be remembered that in our former article we dwelt upon the subject principally in reference to its influence in averting the calamity of fire. Night after night the bulletins were issued, or with the morning's announcement, of fire upon fire—and while the public mind, as we thought, betrayed or was likely to betray some signs of conscious appreciation of its losses, we seized the time to dwell upon the similar terrors in prospective—but no! listless and indolent, or, as we have said before, abstracted in the study and solution of other problems, many, vain and frivolous as compared with this—speculating, bargaining, and playing at *piquenique*—they were not to be charmed out of their fixed bent. Other fires, in number and amount of damage exceeding the former, have occurred—we use the word *occurred*, as most aptly expressing the apparent public estimation of the matter—the *president!* *national!!* *vixen* *swindler!!!* has been most liberally drawn upon in the interval!—thousands and hundreds of thousands of pounds have been thrown into the consuming gulph, by way of stop-gap! Ha! ha!—What laugh might best excite to mocking of this wisdom! but we are out of breath, and out of astonishment. We must have done the sage public some wrong; let us see.

**FIRE INSURANCE.**—This is a significant word, and has a weighty weight of import. What does it mean? We are afraid we must revert to Paddy again for its definition, to him who sat coolly indifferent in the midst of the storm by which his fellow-passengers were affrighted, and answered looks and speeches of remonstrance with a smile at their want of foresight, and a look of triumph in his own magnificence, and with every now and then the words "Faix, and didn't I insure my life before I started?"

Fire insurance and life insurance, as they are called, are fine things in their way, but there is something which these words do not popularly mean that would be more like either. The best fire and life insurance office would be

one that, under a commission, would direct an examination into every pestilential and combustible district in London, and draw from a fund to enforce a timely remedy; let fire and life indemnity offices continue, in heaven's name, to mitigate calamity when it overtakes us, but it would be much better if they could expend their arms, and set them out a better barrier against its approach. We do not despair of seeing this; meanwhile, we are grateful for any aid, and work gratefully under any leading. We shall not be found unwilling to push the matter forward at every opportunity till it reach its issue.

#### DURATION OF LIFE AMONG WORKMEN. STATISTICAL SOCIETY.

THE first meeting of the session for 1843-44 was held on Monday night at the Society's rooms, 11, Regent-street. An interesting paper was read by Professor Guy, founded principally on the experience of King's College Hospital, and tending to shew many important consequences connected with the influence of employment upon health. So far as the professor's inquiries extended, it was made apparent that a fearful disparity exists between the state of health and length of life of the gentry class and the trading and labouring classes, the former having the advantage in an almost incredible proportion. Hard labour and sedentary employments, with their usual concomitants of intemperance in the one case, and working in high temperatures in the other, together with hard and irregular living, and confined habitations, in all, have, it would seem, a most destructive tendency, not only in abridging the period of life, but, as was well observed by Mr. Guy, in disseminating the principles of early decay, debility, effeminacy, &c. in a whole race of people, a consideration of the highest import to every lover of his country and species. Draymen, it was remarked, whom it is common to rank among the class of the privileged as of robust and enduring constitutions, are almost the very reverse; and it was noted in the discussion that followed Mr. Guy's paper, and what we had heard stated before, that this class of men are stated amongst surgeons to be the worst subjects for hospital treatment, the most difficult to cure, even in slight cases of disease or injury. We waited during the reading in anxious expectancy that a few words would fall concerning the artisan class ranking highest in numbers and importance—the builders; but except a casual remark, which we are happy to say appeared to conflict with the tables of Dr. Thackeray, of Leeds, who brings the masons low in the scale of longevity, we heard nothing. There was a promise, however, that this section would have full attention paid to it, and be the subject of a future comprehensive review. The printers, principally compositors and pressmen, formed the chief of those to whom Mr. Guy's papers had reference.

We have thrown these few remarks of notice together principally with a view to prepare our readers and the building class generally to meet this question. It is to them a very important one: its revelations may be very startling.

One thing has always struck us, and we have considered it with feelings far from comfortable. Where do all the old carpenters, masons, bricklayers, and others of our craft go? A knowledge of the manner in which they are *shelled*, or *superannuated*, or *killed off*—we use plain homely terms, to excite to an attentive and anxious consideration—would serve

an important purpose. Plague upon it, and upon the laws of our craft, if it is to make old men at forty-five, and that this should arise out of deprivations, over-exertion, exposure to wet and cold, or any causes which human wit can render moreable. We must look to this. Is it not something to be in possession of the knowledge by which a whole people are to be happier, stronger, longer lived? Such knowledge is that which statistical inquiries may lead to, and if our friends in any district may think it worth while to raise their minds to the consideration of this weighty subject, and not be wholly absorbed, like machines, in manufacturing designs and structures, they will render larger service not only to art, but to its honoured subjects, to their country, and their species.

#### BRITISH MUSEUM.

We are particularly anxious that we do no injustice to Sir Robert Smirke, nor push ourselves forward over presumptuously. In looking over the papers referring to the Museum, we find much to strengthen our first feelings of respect for Sir Robert's talents. The plan of the Museum is very fine; the elevation is just a "missing of the mark." All the elements of a good composition are there, but spoiled in the composing.

We regret that we are unable to fulfil our promise of bringing before our readers this week Sir R. Smirke's design, but we found it impossible with our other arrangements to complete it; we have also a desire to give an opportunity to any gentleman who may be disposed to favour us with a comparative design for the Museum façade.

#### NELSON COLUMN SCAFFOLDING.

We have been favoured with a drawing and description of this ingenious fabric, for fabric we may call it, albeit for the temporary purposes of erecting another more durable. We hope to give it to our readers next week with some remarks of our own on the peculiar merits of the work. We are greatly obliged for the papers forwarded.

#### BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCHES OF DISTINGUISHED ENGINEERS.

*J. Smeaton*

THE extraordinary man, a fac-simile of whose signature heads this page, was born at Aushorpe, near Leeds, in Yorkshire, on the 25th May, 1724. The mere infancy of Smeaton afforded earnest of the natural direction of a mind peculiarly constituted for mechanical pursuits; a variety of anecdotes, which are preserved, go to show that from five years of age he had steadily cultivated the several processes essential or useful to his future profession; and that at eighteen he was in possession of tools proper to the exercise of many trades, all forged and fashioned by his own hands from the various metals of which they were composed; together with a lathe, upon a new and more perfect principle than any previously in use. Originally destined to succeed his father in the respectable and lucrative profession of an attorney, Smeaton was sent to London about the year 1742 to attend the Courts of Law at Westminster; but after some time thus spent, a strong remonstrance, and expression of his dislike to legal practice, made to the elder Mr. Smeaton, procured him liberty to strike out into the new path for which genius had fitted him. We have truly said *new path*, for in England, in the year 1742, civil engineers, as an order, had yet no existence. How singular, then, is the merit of our subject, and of a few others, his contemporaries. Twenty years after his death, the committee of the Society of Civil Engineers, on publishing "The Reports of the late John Smeaton, F.R.S., on various occasions in the course of his practice," made the following remarks on the establishment of the important institution so called, and which are worthy of being repeated and remembered. "About the year 1760 a new era in all the arts